

UN adopts landmark resolution on protection of human rights defenders

21.03.2013

(Geneva - 21 March 2013) - The use and abuse of national law to impair, restrict and criminalise the work of human rights defenders is a contravention of international law and must end, according to a [landmark resolution](#) adopted by the UN Human Rights Council today.

The resolution, which was led by Norway and adopted by consensus, calls on all states to support the work of human rights defenders and to protect them from harassment, threats and attacks.

(Geneva - 21 March 2013) - The use and abuse of national law to impair, restrict and criminalise the work of human rights defenders is a contravention of international law and must end, according to a [landmark resolution](#) adopted by the UN Human Rights Council today.

The resolution, which was led by Norway and adopted by consensus, calls on all states to support the work of human rights defenders and to protect them from harassment, threats and attacks.

'The work of human rights defenders is essential to uphold democracy and the rule of law,' said Michael Ineichen of the International Service for Human Rights.

Introducing the resolution, Norway's Ambassador to the UN, Steffen Kongstad, said he was 'gravely concerned by the serious nature of risks faced by human rights defenders' and called on all states to 'facilitate their work' and ensure it is not 'criminalised or stigmatised'.

'A safe and enabling environment for the work of human rights defenders should be a fundamental objective of any society,' Ambassador Kongstad said.

ISHR's Michael Ineichen welcomed the resolution and praised Norway's leadership on its development. ISHR was closely involved with the development of the text, spearheading input from human rights defenders from around the world.

'The adoption of this resolution is a strong response from the world's peak human rights body to an alarming global growth in the enactment and abuse of laws to restrict human rights activism,' said Mr Ineichen.

'The resolution is a clear affirmation that national law must conform with international human rights law. The resolution demands the amendment of national laws which target human rights defenders, including laws which restrict NGOs from receiving foreign funding, which criminalise "homosexual propaganda", or which limit freedom of expression or assembly on discriminatory grounds.'

Mr Ineichen highlighted that the resolution is consistent with the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, both of which impose legal obligations on states to protect human rights defenders and ensure that any limitations on their activities are strictly necessary, reasonable and proportionate.

Contact: Michael Ineichen, International Service for Human Rights, on m.ineichen@ishr.ch or +41 78 827 7786